

**Abstract ID :** 910

**Title :** The success of a disentanglement event may depend upon the species

**Category :** Conservation

**Student :** Not Applicable

**Preferred Format :** Either Oral or Poster Presentation

**Abstract :** Entanglement in fishing gear has been documented in most baleen whale species found within the Gulf of Maine and in at least two species, humpback and right whales, entanglement involves substantial percentages of both populations. Although only a small number of these animals are documented while entangled and an unknown number of animals die from their entanglements, information gathered during disentanglement intervention remains one of the best means for better understanding and ultimately mitigating the problem of entanglement. Standardized disentanglement techniques used by the Atlantic Large Whale Disentanglement Network have been applied to humpback and right whales with varying degrees of success. We looked at narrative accounts, photographs and video documentation to determine differences of disentanglement outcomes between the two species, from 1997 to 2002. A disentanglement event was defined as an on-water response where a live, entangled animal was assessed and intervention was deemed necessary and possible. Disentanglement outcome was categorized as: no gear removed; partial disentanglement with life-threatening gear remaining; partial disentanglement with no life-threatening gear remaining and all gear removed. 77% of right whale disentanglement events (n=30), involving 15 individuals, had negative outcomes (no gear was removed or partial removal but life-threatening). 75% of humpback whale disentanglement events (n=20), involving 19 individuals, had positive outcomes (partial but not life-threatening or total gear removal). This difference between species was significant ( $X=13.00$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p=0.0003$ ). Significant difference was also found when these events were pooled for their individual entanglements. Disentanglement led to positive outcomes in 41% (n=17) of the right whales and 79% (n=19) of the humpback whales (Fisher's exact test,  $P=0.04$ ). We believe the variability may be due to the more powerful and dangerous nature of right whales combined with the character of their entanglements. Safety and management implications will be discussed.